



File Code: 1950
Date: September 27, 2016

Veronica Warnock
Conservation Director
Hells Canyon Preservation Council
P.O. Box 2768
La Grande, OR 97850

Dear Ms. Warnock:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts about the Lostine Project and collaboration on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

The Forest is committed to collaborating on the management of National Forest lands. We also recognize that collaboration applies in many contexts and can include a broad array of formal to informal activities depending on the complexity and size of projects. There are numerous projects moving forward every year on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and we support the many collaborative efforts designed for these projects, from larger more formal collaborative processes to those smaller efforts that are designed to support focused, small-scale projects, such as Lostine. The formal Forest Collaboratives across the Region are doing great work, but do not have the capacity to review every project.

You stated that the Forest has not made an adequate effort on collaboration and public involvement on the Lostine project, and that you feel the project must be developed through formal collaborative groups. You also stated that the Forest has made no effort to involve you or resolve your concerns. Our records indicate the District reached out to HCPC early in the process to invite their participation, prior to any scoping effort. I understand that the District also offered you additional time to submit comments during the scoping period when you asked for an extension. HCPC has been included in all of the outreaches and notices of events and project updates.

I appreciate your organization spending the time to attend the Lostine public field trip. I understand the District Ranger invited all participants to share thoughts and recommendations for change regarding the draft project design, and that you shared your concerns about collaboration but did not have any additional design input at that time. The Wallowa Mountains Office put together an open house based on input from you and other field trip participants to offer an additional opportunity for community members to learn about the project and provide input on design ideas, but I understand HCPC members did not attend.



The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest feels they are following the direction in the 2014 Farm Bill authority on collaboration, and are involving "multiple interested persons representing diverse interests" and conducting a process that is "transparent and nonexclusive." I recognize it is common to have different perspectives of success on National Forest projects due to the diverse interests within the communities where we work. However, I understand that there is generally broad support from the local communities in Wallowa County regarding the Lostine Project.

Based on this information and the efforts the District has made to reach out to you and other community members I feel they conducted an appropriate level of collaboration and did make an effort to involve you in the project.

I also encourage you to continue working with the Wallowa Mountains Office to gain clarity on the proposed actions in the Lostine Corridor. From your characterization of the proposed activities, such as "clearcutting", I believe there may be some misunderstanding of the silvicultural prescriptions. The project is intended address the impacts of insects and disease while also reducing the risks to both the people who travel and use the corridor, and the many special resource values that you described in your letter. The Forest is working closely with the local community to reach that balance you recommended between public safety and protecting the wild and scenic river values.

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest has been deliberate in their assessment of the Lostine Project to determine if there are extraordinary circumstances in relation to the project. They recognize that there are conditions and resources listed under 36 CFR 220.6(b) present in the project area and have been modifying the project design, based on information gathered through their work with the community, to mitigate potential impacts. They understand that the "mere presence of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion" (36 CFR 220.6 (b)).

I believe there is considerable alignment in the interests of HCPC and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to work together to sustain our Forests resources through fostering resilient and adaptive ecosystems. Please feel free to contact Kris Stein, District Ranger, at krisstein@fs.fed.us or 541-426-5501, if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



THOMAS MONTOYA
Forest Supervisor

cc: Kris Stein, Mary Gautreaux, Kathleen Cathey, Karen Wagner